

# CHRISTIAN MESSENGER.

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VOL. II.

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NO. 33.

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another, as I have loved you—JOHN xiii. 34.

## SERMON.

(Concluded from page 126.)

This flaming fire has been made use of to terrify and torture the minds of the credulous, and has actually had such an effect on the minds of many, as to deprive them of reason. This fire has been used to light the torch of fanaticism, and to serve the cause of priestcraft in the christian church. But observe the language of truth: "Shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire." This flaming fire is from heaven; the Lord Jesus and his mighty angels are in it. If this fire is from heaven, it must be heavenly fire, and if the Lord Jesus and his mighty angels are in it and are happy, it is the fire of which the prophet Malachi speaks in his 3d chapter. "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like a fuller's soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."—This is that fire which the prophet Isaiah mentions in chap. 33. "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly." The forerunner of the Saviour mentions the same fire, Luke iii. "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: Whose fan is his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the

wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."

This is the fire of love. It is from heaven. It flows from God, and is the spirit of Jesus; and is the spirit of judgment and of burning. With this fire, the Lord Jesus and his mighty angels, who are his ministers, take vengeance on Zion's hypocrites. But it is the vengeance of love. "God is love: and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." This kind of vengeance is mentioned in the 99th Psalm: "Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." This is a vengeance worthy of a God of mercy; it is connected with forgiveness, and is aided in its execution by the spirit of grace.

But that kind of vengeance which we have been usually taught to contemplate, is consistent with nothing but the worst and wickedest of human passions. Surely, one would be led to believe, on seeing the tragical scene of horror generally represented as the fulfilment of our text, that some powerful angel from the imaginary regions of darkness, was let loose on mankind! Who would suppose it to be that humble, meek, kind son of Mary, of whom we have such an account in the New Testament?—Will Jesus, who opened the eyes of the blind; who opened the ears of the deaf; who caused the lame man to leap as an hart, the tongue of the dumb to sing; who raised the dead, cast out devils and cured all manner of diseases among the people of a wicked age and nation, ever appear in our world as a destroyer of human beings? Will that blessed, that adorable Son of God, whose name is music in heaven, and consolation to every believer, who gave himself a ransom for all mankind, and prayed for his murderers on his cross, who taketh away the sin of the world, ever come with hostile intentions against the redeemed, and fulfil all the vain imaginations of superstition, by scattering fire-brands of vindictive wrath, and

eternal death among the offspring of his Father.

But it is time to notice the following expressions. "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." The hearer is glad at the naming of this particular, and may have had some fears that the speaker would not notice it. Yes, we will notice it. We will inquire what is everlastingly destroyed? Is it those who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? If they are destroyed everlastingly, they will not remain as objects of misery. That which is destroyed does not remain. The hearer is earnestly requested to pay particular attention to this subject, which will enable him to see, that the opposers of the salvation of God, who have a salvation of their own; the opposers of the righteousness of God, who have a righteousness of their own, must be punished with everlasting destruction of their own righteousness and salvation, in order to be brought to rejoice in the Lord their righteousness, and to joy in the God of their salvation. "From the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." We have been taught to believe, that these words mean that the wicked, in the world to come, will be put away from God's presence, and where the glory of his power will never be known; and yet the advocates of this opinion informs us that God is every where present, filling immensity, and that from his presence no region of the universe is excluded.

The clear and evident meaning of the text is, that the fire, with which vengeance is taken, is emitted from the presence of God, and from the glory of his power. St. Paul spake nothing in this passage which he had not experienced. He had been the very character which he here represents as the subject of punishment. He had troubled the saints; to him the Lord Jesus had been revealed from heaven, in the flam-



ing fire of love divine. Hear its language: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me." "I am Jesus of Nazareth whom thou persecutest." The light and glory from the divine presence which shone about him was above the brightness of the sun. Vengeance was taken on him: he was punished just as love prescribes, with an everlasting destruction of all his legal righteousness; sin revived and he died. But blessed be God, he revealed his Son in this subject of his divine vengeance, and made him a chosen vessel to bear his name to the Gentiles. And so will our heavenly Redeemer do with all those who oppose his grace and trouble his believing children.

If this subject were not sufficiently evident and clear, the Apostle gives us a key that would open it at once. 1 Cor. iii. 13, 14, 15. "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.—If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burnt, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. These works which are represented by hay, wood and stubble, are the inventions of the superstitious; they are the creeds and formularies of human invention and authority. Burned they must be, let their advocates complain ever so much; let them try all they can to hide them away from the light and heat of truth; as fire is the most subtle fluid in nature, from which nothing can escape, so is the fire of divine grace most penetrating, and will sooner or later demolish this mighty pile of rubbish, the labor of many ages of superstition; yes, and all the unclean vermin of hatred, malice, wrath, the spirit of persecution, which have lodged in the palaces thereof, are likewise appointed unto destruction.

To conclude. It is a consideration which largely contributes to the support of what has been argued from the words under examination, that the punishment which we have set forth is in perfect consistency with the spirit and temper of the gospel and religion of Jesus. There is not a Christian, a lover of truth divine, in the world, who would not be willing to contribute to

the administration of such punishment, even to the nearest and dearest friend and connexion in life. We may even go further, and say, there is not an honest inquirer after truth on earth, who is not willing to throw himself before this flaming fire from heaven in which he sees the Lord Jesus and his ministers. The very prayer of such a one is, "Search me, O my God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." On the contrary, admitting the punishment noted in our text and in like passages, is, in reality, what we have been educated to believe, an eternal state of excruciating torture, is it possible to reconcile the sentiment with the spirit of grace, of love to mankind, of love to enemies? Can it be reconciled with the duty of praying for all men? The spirit and temper of Jesus are perfectly true, they lead to no deception, they teach us nothing but eternal realities, and our greatest wisdom lies in constantly endeavouring to conform both in theory and in practice to that self-denying path in which they lead.

We owe it to ourselves, to say the least, to open our eyes, our ears, and to see and hear for ourselves; it is our duty to understand with our own minds and judgments. Those who have formed creeds for us, have never promised to be our bondsmen at what they call the bar of God; but tell us we must answer for ourselves. Then let us look, see and hear, yea and understand for ourselves.

That these desultory remarks designed to illustrate and explain our subject may be of service to this numerous and attentive audience, may the God of our salvation add his blessing.

From the Unitarian Miscellany.

#### *Practical Comment on Toleration.*

The following extracts are taken from the "Digest compiled from the Records of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church," published a few months ago by order of the General Assembly.

"SEC. 1. *The Testimony of the late Synod of New York and Philadelphia against Intolerance.*

"It having been represented to the Synod, that the Presbyterian Church suf-

fers greatly in the opinion of other denominations, from an apprehension that they had intolerant principles, the Synod do solemnly and publicly declare, that they ever have, and still do, renounce and abhor the principles of intolerance; and we do believe that every peaceable member of civil society ought to be protected in the full and free exercise of his religion."—p. 337.

These are noble sentiments, and would do honour to any denomination of Christians. This declaration was made in 1783. The following resolution, which was passed in 1814, is a practical comment of the General Assembly upon its own principles, and shows what progress this church made in religious toleration during a period of thirty years. It is also copied into the Digest, which was compiled in 1820, and made one of the articles, which we learn from the title page, "appear to be of permanent authority and interest."

#### "SEC. 3. *The Administration of Baptism by Unitarians invalid.*

"The committee to which was referred the question submitted by the member from the Presbytery of Harmony, and with the advice of that Presbytery, in the following words; viz.

"A person who had been baptized in infancy by Dr. Priestly, applied for admission to the Lord's table; should the baptism administered by Dr. Priestly, then a Unitarian, be considered valid?" reported; and their report being read, was adopted, and is as follows; viz.

"Resolved, That this question be answered in the negative; and it accordingly was determined in the negative. In the present state of our country, whilst Unitarian errors, in various forms, are making their insidious approaches—whilst the advocates of this heresy in many cases are practising a system of concealment, and insinuating themselves into the confidence of multitudes who have no suspicion of their defection from the faith, the Assembly feel it to be their duty to speak without reserve. It is the deliberate and unanimous opinion of this Assembly, that those who renounce the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity, and deny that Jesus Christ is the same in substance, equal in power and glory, with the Father, cannot be recognized as ministers of the Gospel, and that their ministrations are wholly invalid."—p. 96.

In respect to this unchristian and intolerant resolution, we shall only say, that we hope the time will soon come, when there shall be no longer any reason for uttering the charge of "concealment;" when the ignorance, that could suggest



it, shall be enlightened; and the illiberality, which could sanction it, shall yield to the spirit and temper of the gospel.—And as for the validity of our ministry, it is happy for us, that we look to a much higher authority, than this inquisition of the Presbyterian Church,—to no other, as we humbly hope and believe, than the commands of the Saviour, and the example of his Apostles.

## Christian Messenger.

Philadelphia, Saturday, March 17, 1821.

### REVIEW

OF THE

### "PRESBYTERIAN MAGAZINE."

(Continued.)

Did Christ, even admitting that a divine portion of him suffered, undergo a punishment of infinite magnitude—he did not!—To have undergone a punishment infinite in magnitude, he must have suffered all that he possibly could have suffered—now, if his sufferings had extended to double the time they did extend to, will any one attempt to say that he would not have suffered more than he did?—we believe not, if they cautiously examine the subject, but on the contrary; will confess, that in order for Christ to undergo a punishment as great as could possibly be inflicted on him, or in other words, to undergo an infinite punishment, he must be miserable to all eternity! But, after all, we cannot admit that divinity ever did or ever can suffer.

Granting, however, for a moment, that in the sufferings of Christ we have an infinite atonement for the infinite sins of those who will be saved, why are any sinners punished, seeing that God has had an equivalent for all their sins.—For, as the sins of all mankind are no more or less than infinite—they could require no other than an infinite atonement: Now, the atonement of Christ is said to be of infinite magnitude; consequently, we have had an atonement equalling in extent, the transgressions of the whole world.

After all, what proof have we that sin is an evil of infinite magnitude—Sin is an act committed by a human being, but, we are assured by the writer of the present essay, that no human action is infinite, how then is sin infinite; because, says Dr. Wylie, "it is violation of an infinite law, rebellion against an infinite God, and productive of infinite mischief," the latter reason, is simply this—Sin is an infinite evil, because it is an infinite evil;—On the same principle that sin is infinite because committed against an infinite

God, every sin is also omnipotent, all wise, omniscient and infinitely good, because committed against a God who is omnipotent, all wise, omniscient, and infinitely good—and again, on the same mode of reasoning, we may maintain that sin converts the soul, because committed against the law of God, which "is perfect converting the soul." If the reasoning in the first case be correct, it is equally correct in the latter, however absurd the conclusion.

For what purpose, I would ask, are those punished, for whom Christ did not die? the reply will be, that, as they have no personal righteousness, nor is the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, they are punished in order by the eternity of their own sufferings to furnish a personal expiation of their sins, as a satisfaction to divine justice—or in other words, to pay the infinite debt they owe their maker, [see page 21.]—But will divine justice on this plan, ever be satisfied? certainly not, for the time never can arrive when man shall have suffered an eternal punishment, and as Dr. Wylie himself very correctly argues, "any partial payment of an infinite debt would be equivalent to nothing."—Therefore, at any period of Eternity, the debt due by the sinner will be as great as ever, and divine justice will be as far from being satisfied as it was the first hour after the punishment commenced.—Divine justice, on this plan, will, therefore, remain to eternity unsatisfied.

But, I would demand, what does justice really require of man?—Simply, justness in its object.—"What doth the Lord require of thee, oh man! but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Micah v. 8.—To produce this justness in the creature must all its inflictions be directed, but will the eternity of the punishment of the finally impenitent effect this?—no—if the sinner is never to be made righteous, he will always be a sinner, and on this doctrine, Sin or Evil, is not only *infinite*, but *eternal*.—The bible therefore, must be incorrect when it declares that sin shall be destroyed and an end made to transgression—for, the *orthodox*, they who, as themselves declare, are alone entitled to expound the secrets of God's counsel, declare that sin and misery shall exist for ever.

For Dr. Wylie to have established the correctness of the reasoning contained in his Essay, he should have proven, and that from the clear and distinct declarations of divine revelation, the following propositions, viz:

1st. That Sin is an infinite Evil. [\*Note.]

2ndly. That divine Justice demands the eternal misery of the sinner, and,

3dly. That God cannot, consistently with his Justice, destroy the "Carnal mind," or the sinful disposition which exists in man, unless he receive a satisfaction—which satisfaction, is the infinite sufferings of a divine being: and, we now earnestly request Dr. Wylie to re-examine the subject, and, if he be able, to establish the above doctrines by divine authority, and the moment he does so, we then pledge ourselves to prove, and that incontestibly, that one or other of the following conclusions must be true—Either, 1st, That no one of the human race shall be saved, and divine justice will never be satisfied; or, 2dly. That divine justice has already been satisfied, and every individual of the great family of mankind must be saved.

Sin, must be considered either in reference to the principle exciting an individual to transgress, or, in reference to the actual and past transgression itself,—now, in the latter respect, the sin itself can never be done away as far as it regards the transgressor, for, he can never recal an action already committed.—But, the consequences of this sinful action may be done away, or else cease of themselves; Even, however, after they have ceased, as long as the individual who committed them, retains the disposition to transgress, he is still a sinner, and incapable of enjoying the happiness of heaven.—Unhappiness is a necessary consequence of possessing a sinful heart;—suffering or punishment, of committing sinful acts—and each, will remain as long as the cause from which they result remains.—"Sin and misery, righteousness and felicity, are necessarily connected by an immutable law" [See Dr. W's Essay, page 17, col. 2.] Now, in order to render sinners righteous, and of consequence happy, the sinful disposition which excites him to transgress against the law of God, must be eradicated from his heart;—all future transgression will then cease of necessity.

How, then, is this to be effected—has the anticipation of eternal punishment effected it?—let the answer be in the words made use of by Dr. Wylie himself,—"There is no one righteous, no not one!—The imaginations of the thoughts of the heart, are only evil continually.—If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us!—The history of man, is a history of depravity, and, its concomitants, lamentation, mourning, and wo!"—Notwithstanding, then, the preaching of a Hell, sin is not in any degree destroyed!—Will the infliction of eternal punishment destroy it?—If it be



a fact, as believed by us, and admitted by Dr. Wylie, that by an immutable law, sin and misery are necessarily connected, and righteousness and happiness, then, all mankind must be saved, or sin will never cease, for as long as unhappiness remains, sin must, as its cause, remain also.

Universalists believe, as they are taught by divine revelation, that God will finally subdue or destroy the sinful nature of man, and this, from no other motive than his love to his creatures, in whom, the possession of it is the cause of misery; and from his hatred to sin, as in every respect opposed to his divine perfections.

Independent of its being contrary to the express declarations of scripture, we reject the doctrine of a vicarious atonement, from the following reasons;—1st. Because it renders God unjust and cruel—inasmuch as he punishes the innocent, and lets the guilty go free.—“Any compromise of Justice with mercy, would leave Justice no longer immaculate.” [see Dr. Wylie’s Essay, page 18. col. 1.]—If justice requires the eternal punishment of the sinner, any other method of settling the account is a compromise.

2dly. Because, it renders God destitute of mercy,—inasmuch, as he would not, of his own free will, purge man of sin, but, on the contrary, the salvation of the elect had to be purchased of him, by sufferings, exceeding in magnitude and intensity what would have been the eternal agony, misery, and anguish of those who are saved:—I say, exceeding, because it has already been shewn, from Dr. Wylie’s own reasoning, that eternal misery, alone, can never satisfy justice, of consequence, in order that the sufferings of Christ should be an atonement for sin, they must have exceeded it, in extent and intensity.

3dly. It places the character of Christ, in the most unamiable of lights—his suffering for a part, and not the whole of his sinful brethren.

4thly. It destroys the idea of free grace—for, that which is purchased by an equivalent price, is not a free gift.

5thly. The sufferings of Christ, considered merely as infinite sufferings, do not remove the sinner from the guilty state in which he stood before the sufferings of Christ took place.—Those sins already committed cannot be recalled by those sufferings, nor can they regenerate the heart of the sinner, for this, we are assured, is the office of the Holy Ghost, and not of Christ.

In conclusion, we would ask Dr. Wylie provided one of his own children were to disobey him, and he had it in his power either to render him as miserable as pos-

sible, as long as the child lived, or, to convince him of his error, and render him completely obedient in future, which alternative he would adopt—which would redound most to his credit—or, whether the misery of the child would in any degree compensate for his disobedience; and, as we know he would decide upon the side of mercy, we desire him to carry this principle up to his father “who is in heaven”—who is a God of infinite love, and then say, reasoning from the nature of his character, whether we have not a right to conclude that Being would also act upon the same commendable principle—and render by a display of his divine power, his rebel children obedient and dutiful subjects.—We think we have; for, the dealings and disposition of God, towards men, are frequently represented in scripture by the conduct of a good and wise parent towards his offspring.—With these observations, we take leave of Dr. Wylie for the present. We request him, if they should meet his eye, to consider, candidly and without prejudice, the arguments we have offered against the doctrines advanced in his Essay, and to compare them with the general tenor of Scripture;—if we have offered any thing contrary to the divine testimony or to reason, we require him, by the situation he holds of a public teacher, to shew us, by the scriptures, our error, and not, by his silence to add weight to what himself and his colleagues believe to be a doctrine not merely incorrect, but diametrically opposite to Christianity.—The moment he convinces us, by the page of truth, our doctrine is false, we are willing to, and will abandon it.

Much of the above reasoning will apply to many of the assertions advanced in the other essays in this number of the magazine, and from this, and the reasons already mentioned, we do not intend taking any further notice of them—we cannot, however, take leave of the number without noticing the following, as it is called, “*divine principle*,”—it is extracted from “Shepherd’s Sincere Convert,” but, the editors having inserted it in the magazine without any expression of their disapprobation, by so doing they have made it their own. “*Those who are saved by Christ, are very few, and these few are saved with much difficulty.*” [page 39. col. 1.]

I would ask these reverend gentlemen by what authority they proscribe the salvation of Christ to but a few?—Not by that of the Scriptures!—for they expressly declare that, “*grace by Jesus Christ hath abounded unto many.*”—Rom. v. 15.—“By the obedience of one, many

be made righteous.”—Rom. v. 19.—“We see Christ, who was made a little lower than the angels, &c. crowned with glory and honour that he might taste death for every man—for, it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Heb. ii. 10.—“Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Heb. ix. 28. and, in innumerable other passages; and, from Revelations, v. 13. we find that this many, are no less than every creature, in the Heavens, in the Earth, under the Earth, in the Sea, and all that in them are—in a word, every being in the Universe,—and, it was no less a number of sinners than this many, that Christ came to save. Col. i. 20. &c. &c. &c.

The reverend gentlemen will now please also compare their other assertion, that “these few are saved with much difficulty,” with the scriptures, and determine whether it is proper to say that any thing is difficult with that God who spake a world into being, and who, by the breath of his mouth, could also in a moment annihilate that world with all its breathing multitudes.—“Be not wise above what is written,” should be a caution inscribed on the minds of all those who attempt to maintain doctrines which have not the remotest foundation in the “record which God has given of his son.”

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[\* NOTE.] Dr. Wylie, after searching the Scriptures, could not meet with any passage in which the word *infinite*, is connected with *sin* or *transgression*, excepting in Job. xxii. 5. and which, though he has rendered it as powerful as possible by misquoting it, he still finds cannot be applied to prove the infinite magnitude of sin.—The fact is, the words, and are not “*thine iniquities infinite*?” would here appear to have reference to the number of Job’s iniquities. It is however, only used in a hyperbolical sense to express large or great, as it is also, in the Prophet Nahum ii. chap. v. 9. (in the margin,) and also in chap. iii. v. 9.

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